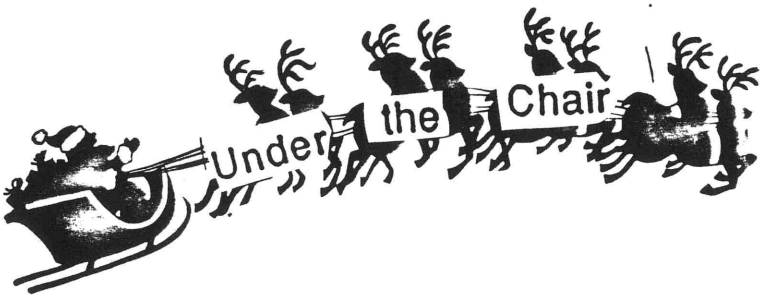
RNA FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

RIVERVIEW Neighborhood Association

DEC/JAN 1989

232 Ogden Avenue – Jersey City, N.J. 07307 – (201) 798-0493

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION OR ELECTED OFFICIAL.



Instead of our usual reporting of neighborhood events, this column would like to reflect during this holiday season on the significance of two important religious festivals: Christmas and Hanukkah.

Christmas, celebrating the birth of the Christian savior, Jesus Christ, is a time of renewal for all people. It is a symbol for the hope and faith of mankind. Hope, in terms of our ability to become better people: more caring, loving and considerate of our neighbors,. Hope also that our own lives can and will be improved. Faith in ourselves to persevere and accomplish our dreams and goals. Faith also in others: not to mistrust or suspect our neighbors. It is a time to think of the good in our lives and to extend that good to our neighbors and community, help, understand and respect each other. Remember the oft cliched, but never truer saying: "Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you" - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, AS YOURSELF.

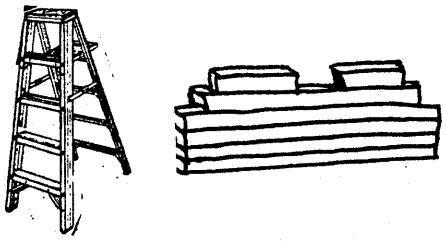
Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of dedication, can be seen as the struggle of a small band of people against not only the oppression from without, but just as important, the corruption and complacence from within. It teaches the value of the few against the many, of the weak against the strong, of passion against indifference, of the single unpopular voice against the thunder of public opinion. Its symbol is appropriately a small light kindled when the shadows fall. We as a neighborhood can learn from this example, to strive for a better quality of life. We as a community must hold that goal and fight to preserve our identity against any person, public official or agency that would hurt us.

In this spirit of love and strength, the Riverview Neighborhood Association wishes all our members, neighbors and friends a glorious holiday season and a healthy new year.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Riverview Neighborhood Association would like to extend to ALL its members, neighbors, and friends A JOYOUS HOLIDAY, A MERRY CHRISTMAS, A HAPPY HANUKKAH, and A HEALTHY NEW YEAR!

The Editor
&
Staff



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Another project affecting our neighborhood is scheduled to come before the Board of Adjustment on Monday, December 12th. The owner of the grocery store on the Southeast corner of Palisade Avenue and Cuneo Place is planning to build five stories of apartments on top of that building and needs certain variances from the zoning laws.

I went to the Urban Design and Research offices last week and looked at the drawings for their application. The plans call for 4 stories with two apartments on each floor (a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom) and a top story with one large apartment, making a total of 9 units.

An interesting discovery was learning that the project is in an R-4 (high-rise) zone and is, therefore, within legal height limitations. One of the requested variances of interest to us is for a reduction in the required number of on-site parking spaces. The zoning law would require 8 spaces for this project, but the developer is providing only 5.

Since the building is on a small lot, excessive density, excessive lot coverage, insufficient setbacks, lack of side and from yards are some of the other variance requests of this application.

RNA members who have previously been involved in Planning and Development Committee activities might recall that there is only one small sliver of high-rise zoning in all of the Heights, and we have it! (The area east of Palisade Avenue, south of Franklin Street.) Not only have many of us believed this situation should be changed, but the City has promised us on more than one occasion that it would. We hope that this project (a high-density 'mini-tower' with insufficient parking) is not going to be a prototype for further development along the southernmost block of Ogden Avenue where vacant lots and dilapidated houses are apparently being assembled for development and where high-rise zoning is also still in effect. Therefore, RNA urges all its concerned members to joining the association on Monday the 12th and fight this threat to our community. We've done it before and we'll continue to protect our blocks from unnecessary development.

Other news is that the application to build a new 3-story factory in place of existing garages on Webster Avenue has been postponed It appears that the local block association's organized opposition to that development may be effective. We sent a letter to the Board of Adjustment in support of their efforts. This project is scheduled to go before the Board of Adjustment on January 26th, 1989. The Webster Avenue Association urges all concerned people to come to City Hall that night and support the neighborhood's fight.

GET WELL WISHES

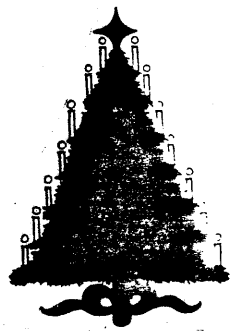
Best wishes to a few of our friends who are recovering from illness: Edith Redmirski and Marie Murray.

HARBORVIEW'S HOLIDAY PARTY

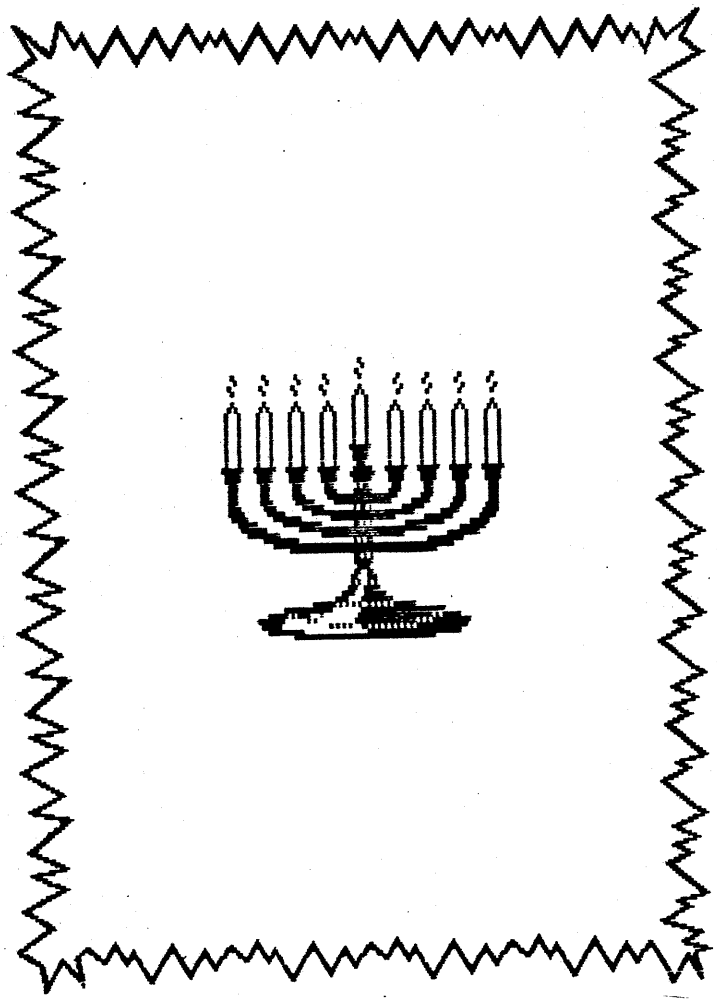
A few weeks ago, I participated in RNA's Holiday Party for our neighbors, the residents at Harborview Healthcare Facility. When I arrived, I was greeted with so many smiles and hellos from the residents, who had just had lunch and were still seated at their tables, anticipating the special desserts baked by RNA members. It was a beautiful day, with light streaming in the tall windows, and the place was festively decorated and already buzzing with excitement. Jack Rea, Mrs. Tuzzo, Rose Scalzo, Marie Tresca and Kathy Brennan were busy arranging cookies and cake and apple cider at the dessert table, and I was immediately put on waitress duty. I soon discovered my first job was to figure out which patients were on sugar-restricted diets (we had sugar-free sweets) and which ones could sample any of the baked goodies they chose. No easy task, as many of the oldsters clearly took delight in teasing me... Everyone I talked with seemed to be in a festive mood, eager to chat and share their thoughts and observations with me. One woman told me she was among Harborview's very first patients, and that each year she looked forward to meeting the people from the neighborhood at this traditional party. Another man told me about his two daughters, one in Staten Island and one in New Jersey, and how grateful he was to have had daughters instead of sons! A lady at another table told me she admired my "hourglass figure" (had to get that one in!!) and there were many, many others. It was so enjoyable for me to speak with these people, all who had lived so much more of life than I. Their years of experience had made them calm and patient and very giving, and in their eyes I saw such kindness and warmth. Just for the experience of meeting them all, I would say I was fortunate, but when a large group of young schoolchildren arrived and swarmed around each table with pom-poms and hand-made Thanksgiving cards and all that incredible youthful energy, the feeling of warmth and renewal in the room was truly rewarding. At this strange point in our culture, when the various generations often remain segregated simply by the nature of our society, it was a real treat to see us all together, all people, in all our variety, and to see the pleasure on each person's face. Luckily Vito remembered to bring his camera and he took some fine - and crowded! - group shots.

After the children and most of the residents had left the room, and we were just about finished cleaning up, we found a few extra Thanksgiving cards that the children had made. So along with my very happy memories of the day, I also have a handmade memento, a yellow, laminated card with a crayoned turkey on the front that reads "Happy Thanksgiving from Julio, Grade 4" How fortunate I was to meet you all, the oldsters and the youngsters, and to share in the spirit of Thanksgiving with you!

Valerie Kramer



(SEE PHOTOGRAPHS OF PARTY ON PAGE 11)



Hanukkah, the Jewish Feast of Dedication, is a religious festival of the world which commemorates a historical event - the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem in the year 165 B.C. The particular story which is associated with the festival is, therefore, the story of how that triumph was accomplished - the tale of the heroic resistance offered by Judah the Maccabee and his followers to the oppressive legislation of the Syrian King Antiochus IV. Back of that narrative, however, and back of the annual festival lies the recognition of something deeper - something which was indeed expressed in the particular event but which itself transcends it. What Hanukkah celebrates is the inalienable right of human beings to their own character and identity and, in commemorating the way in which that right was once defended, the festival reasserts it from year to year. For that reason, Hanukkah is no mere antiquarian relic, but an occasion of everliving, contemporary significance. This year, the first night of Hanukkah was celebrated on December 3rd.

(Source material provided by Temple Beth-el, Kennedy Blvd. J.C.)

THE STORY OF HANUKKAH

Long ago the Jews were told,
"You must deny your Lord
And worship Syrian idols
Or perish by the sword."

Led by Judah Maccabee
All Jews throughout the land
Armed themselves for battle
And prepared to take a stand.

Although untrained in warfare,
They were strengthened by th Lord.
Their army was victorious,
And their freedom was restored.

The priests then cleaned the temple
And found to their dismay,
A single flask of sacred oil...
Enough for just one day.

But at the dedication,
The oil sustained the lights
So that they burned miraculously
For eight full days and nights.

Now every year at Hanukkah,
The bright menorah rays
Remind us of that miracle
In the Maccabean days.

NEWSLETTER STAFF

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HOLIDAY RECOLLECTIONS

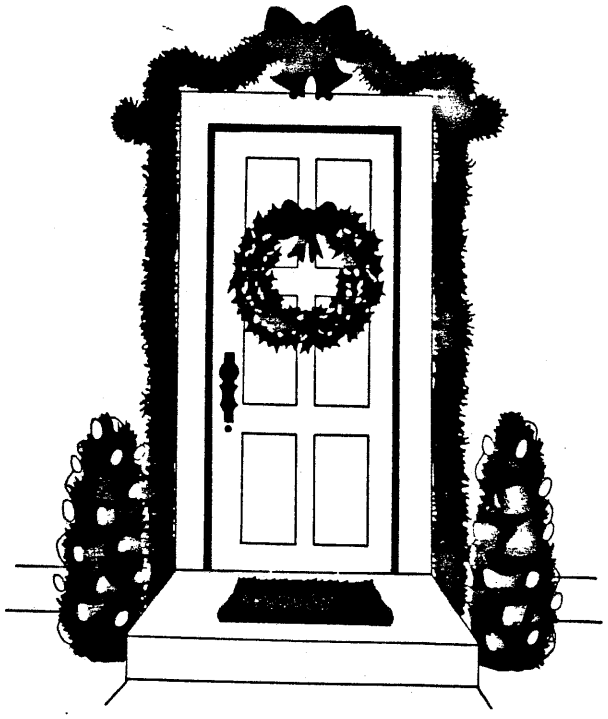
The Holiday season on Ogden Ave sixty years ago was quite different than today. The season officially started on Thanksgiving Day. Nowadays, the children dress up in costumes on Halloween and as is todays tradition they beg saying "trick or treat". Years ago our custom as children was to do the same - but - we did it on Thanksgiving day and we begged using the words "anything for Thanksgiving"?

Also, in more recent years the children have deserted us residents and they now do their "thing" on more commercial streets such as Central Ave. In the "old days", little girls dressed up as big ladies. They tried to look as much like their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, or big sisters as they possibly could. They sometimes tried to imitate a popular movie star of the day. The boys, of course, had their own idols to dress up like. Policemen, firemen, railroad engineers with the blazing red neckerchief, were some of the idols that were copied back then. Some even tried dressing and walking like their favorite screen actor Charlie Chaplin.

Thanksgiving day also brought the traditional rivalry of the Dickinson/St. Peters football game. The bigger children and the adults were the ones to go to the game and root for their particular favorite. I like to think back (whether it was so or not) that always there was a goodly dusting of snow, which greatly contributed to the overall atmosphere of the season. The game was always played in the morning to ensure that the teams and the fans would get home on time to enjoy the traditional turkey dinner in the bosom of their respective families.

Then came Christmas. Only natural Christmas trees were available as artificial trees had not yet been invented. Trees were bought at locations right in the neighborhood - such as Palisade and Griffith - and would cost anywhere from twenty-five cents to two dollars. Those people with limited means, would wait until late Christmas Eve and the man selling the trees would give you one for practically nothing and more often than not for free.

The tree decorations were beautifully colored and were made of a very thin substance that could be termed glass. You had to handle them gingerly because they were easily broken. A tree was not considered properly decorated unless it had at least some strings of freshly popped pop-corn and garlands of gold and silver tinsel. There were other tree decorations such as little santas dangling from a rubberized string and striped candy canes were also hung on the branches by their own crooks. Next, candles in their holders were snapped onto the tree branches and a little village including the creche was built beneath the tree. The final touch was placing the treetop ornament.



An angel or a star were the ones used the most. Sometimes it was a special steeple-like piece that was made of thin colored glass.

On Christmas Eve the family all gathered and the candles were lighted in the otherwise darkened room. It was a festive and spiritual sight indeed.Christmas Wreaths were also made of natural branches since artificial wreaths were, as yet, unthought of. In later years it became popular for people to light up the front of their homes with many strings of electric lights.

Gifts were part of the tradition then as well as now. Girls usually received dolls, doll carriages and paper doll cutouts. Boys often received baseball equipment, electric trains or erector sets. Boys and girls might also be given sleds, ice-skates, roller-skates or bicyles. Children, especially those who had received new sleds, were most happy when their prayers were answered and it would snow. They wanted the chance to try their new sleds.

In this neighborhood that was made twice as much fun because nearby streets are hilly and the children made a big thing out of "belly-whopping". This maneuver consisted of running with your sled a small distance-throwing the sled down on the snowy street or hill and jumping belly down on top of the sled. The ride itself often covered less distance then the preparation for it. Auto traffic, in those days, did not pose as a great a threat to us as todays traffic poses to children now.

Belated congratulations to Frances and Frank Santora on the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary. I am sure you all join in wishing them both the best.

Many working people were paid on Christmas Eve. You can imagine the last minute frenzied shopping. Like the Christmas tree vendor, many merchants lowered their prices for such last minute sales.

Employers had the custom of giving their employees gifts on Christmas Eve. Often these gifts were gold pieces. They ranged in value from the attractive $2.50 piece to the $20.00 piece, better known as the Golden Eagle.

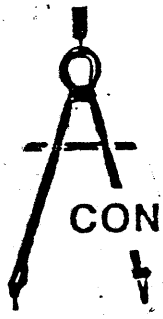
In those long-ago years, New Year's Eve was spent at home partying with family and friends while awaiting

the arrival of midnight. Familiar signals would announce the New Year. Those dependable whistles from the factories of the surrounding area and fog-horns from vessels on the Hudson River were the clarion ushering in the first minute of the New Year. Traditionally, at midnight, the children would march around the block beating mercilessly on pots and pans to ward off evil spirits*. Soon after midnight neighbors visited each other to convey their best wishes for the new year.

I hope, fellow RNA members, that my remembrances are some that you also share. I hope that my little foray into the past has brought back fond memories of your childhood. Most especially I hope that you remember the joyousness of the whistles and the fog-horns on the eve of the New Year and of how much more meaning the event held for us because of those familiar sounds.

*(the warding off of evil spirits with loud noise originated in ancient China.)

Happy Holidays
Frances B. Santoro



CONRAD'S CORNER

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE JERSEY JOURNAL Renaming the Count House

A resolution by the Hudson County Bar Association, June 23, 1966 stated that the Association opposed any demolition of the Jersey City landmark and urged "that this public building be maintained for civic or cultural purposes." All the courts formerly housed in the 19th Century building have moved to the Hudson County Administration Building and recent "rumors have been circulating that the Courthouse is to be demolished" according to the association.

All the judges marched out of the old Courthouse like school boys to the Administration Building with nothing to say except Judge John Drewer who made a plea to save the building. He worked in the Courthouse when it opened in 1910 for 35 years.

As late as May 13, 1976 County Supervisor Ed Clark said, "We haven't had one solid solution on how that building is going to be operated and whose going to pay for it". He said he didn't have one solid solution to the continuance of that building once the renovations have been made. No word from the Bar Association at the time of using it as a Courthouse again because of the great need for court rooms.

If Joe Duffy had not attended a Freeholder meeting none of us would have known that the Bar Association wanted to change the name of the Courthose. At the next Freeholders meeting, we were that notices of the dedication had already been sent out and they could no longer cancel the celebration because this would embarrass Judge Brennan.

Although the Citizens Committee of Hudson County saved the Courthouse, none of us got an invitation for the dedication. When Judge Brennan was making his acceptance speech of having the Courthouse named in his honor, he said he was somewhat perplexed as to why the Bar Association would do this. He was after all only a judge in the Courthose for three years and was a native of Newark.

Joe Duffy and I went to the celebration without an invitation. When we wanted to shake hands with Judge Brennan after the ceremony, we found he had already left for Washington and never even went to the reception in Liberty Park.

Is this the slipshod way the Bar Association and the Freeholders decided to change the name of a public building without any citizen input or notification of the other cities and towns of Hudson County as required by the sunshine law? Why wasn't the Courthouse named for Judge Drewen since he fought to save it or was it because he was a Republican like Senator Case who got all the money for its restoration?

In October, 1976 the Bar Association honored several county officials for their efforts to preserve the old Courthouse as part of a nostalgic visit to the building by lawyers and judges, among them were County Executive Ed Clark and others who led the team to scuttle the building and were not taking credit for saving it. It's hard to believe that in this predominantly Catholic community a pro-abortion judge would have the honor of having the Hudson County Courthouse named after him with the anti-abortion pickets protesting outside.

With all these shenanigans going on Chief Justice Brennan ought to check to see what kind of justice is being meted out in Hudson County.

Theodore Conrad

MEETING MINUTES

The November meeting of the Riverview Neighborhood Assn. was devoted to energy conservation. This was the main topic of discussion that the representatives of Public Service presented in their program. Using both slides and props the "E" team as they called themselves, showed the more than eighty people in attendance how to make their homes more draft free and at the same time how to save energy.
The team has four spokespersons and each gave a different part of the presentation. They showed us that it is quite easy for anyone to make windows and doors draft free. Each one of the property owners and tenants, who had preregistered, and who attended the meeting was given a bag of gifts from Public Service. These gifts were items that could be used to make the homes more air tight. Such things as clear plastic for windows and adhesive sealing tape for window edges and doors.
Besides the free gifts and the practical information the "E" team also provided the evenings refreshments. The entire evenings seemed to be a success.
We also managed to make a few announcements regarding regular business, including an update on our food drive that has been extended to the December meeting; our Christmas caroling will take place on December 17th starting at 6:30pm from the Riverview Park; the annual toy drive for needy children is also deadlined for the December meeting etc. Please join us on Tuesday the 13th of December at 7:30pm in the Harborview Health Care Center for our next Association meeting. It is worth your time and effort to attend these meetings and to be instrumental in shaping the enviroment in which you live.

Maria E. Tuzzo
Secretary

P.S. Thank you to the very gracious ladies who prepared and served the food for the energy meeting. Also see seperate articles regarding various events of interest to our membership.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report the death of R.N.A. member Mr. John Mastro. Only last month we extended our sympathy to John and his family on the loss of Mrs Mastro. We now express our sincere regrets to the Mastro children in this their latest sorrow. Long time Ogden Av residents will always remember the sound of Johns gravely voice as he talked with neighbors and surveyed the passing scene from his front porch.

The R.N.A. extends to its member Mr Dennis Elgrim, its sympathy at the loss of his father Mr Eugene Elgrim this past month.

We have often heard of abuse towards women and children, yet abuse towards the elderly is often an unheard-of issue.

Abuse of the elderly comes from physical abuse, mistreatment and neglect either through friends, relatives or institutions. Physical abuse is characterized by kicking, shoving, beating or sexual assaults. Mistreatment is defined as giving the wrong doses of medication to the elderly when they cannot tend for themselves, isolating the elderly from contact with people, forcibly restraining the elderly or chemically restraining them. Neglect is being unable to provide safe, continuous and necessary services such as food and treatment. Aside from the above, the elderly also face abandonment, theft of money or properly and verbal abuse.

What can you do if you suspect someone is being abused? If you work in social services and know something like this is occurring, by law you are required to report it. There are laws that protect the elderly. If the person whom you suspect of being abused is in an institution such as a nursing home, you can contact the department of health or the agency licensing the institution to operate.

Many organizations assist elderly victims. Some states even provide guardians when proof is given that the elderly cannot take care of themselves. If you suspect someone of abuse, you can contact the following:

- Clergy
- Senior Citizens Center
- Gray Panthers
- National Council on the Aging
  600 Maryland Avenue
  Washington, D.C.
  (202) 479-1200
- Dept. of Welfare
- Dept. of Health
- Offices for the Aging
- Visiting Nurse Association
- Hospital Social Workers, Doctors or Nurses
- Battered Women's Center
- 911 or the police

Abuse should not be tolerated under any circumstances. If you know it exists, do something about it.

Alice Soto

HARVEST PARTY-A SUCCESS

The annual party, given for the residents of the Harbor-view Health Care Center, by the members of the R.N.A. was held on Friday November 18th. Besides the Association members who served the refreshments there were a number of children from public school #8 on hand to help cheer the elderly residents. Mr Charles Trefurt principle of the school brought about forty young people to the Center for the occasion to help entertain. The children recited a poem, demostrated their cheering, and gave hand made greetings to each of the residents in attendance. They also visited those who were unable to leave their rooms to attend the party. R.N.A. is extremely grateful to Mr Trefurt and the children for their participation, that was most helpful in making the event a success.

Jack Rea
Party Chairman

FOOD DRIVE--LAGGING

I am sad to report that the food drive for needy people has not been as successful to date as it was in the past two years. We have extended the deadline for contributions but we are still running behind last year. So far we have only gathered six bags of groceries. Please make an effort to contribute to this very worthy cause. Any canned goods and other nonperishable food stuffs can be brought to the December R.N.A. meeting or call 659-2245 after 5:00pm for location of members home where you may leave your contribution. The Salvation Army, which is distributing baskets of food for Christmas, will be picking up our donation on December 15th. Please make every effort to help someone less fortunate than we.

Maria E. Tuzzo
Committee Chairwoman

THIRD ANNUAL CAROLING

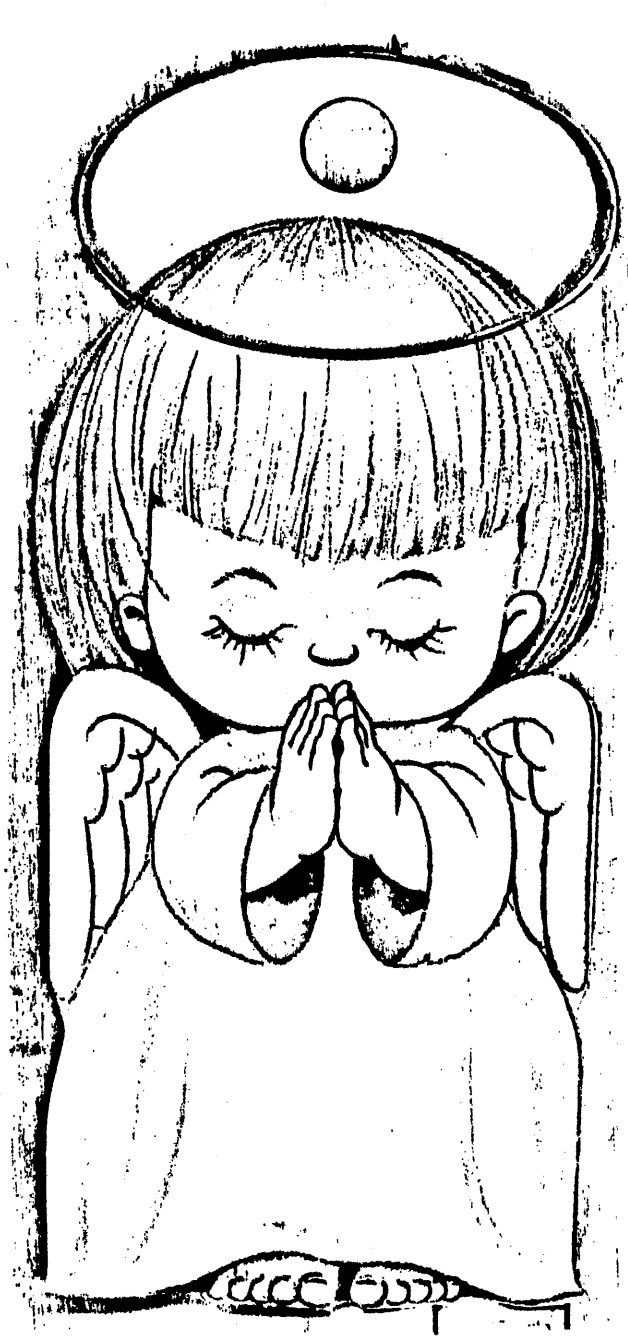
The R.N.A. members will be singing their Christmas Carols on Saturday December 17th this year. Anyone interested in joining the fun should be in front of the gazebo in the park at 6:30pm on the afore mentioned date. If possible bring a flash light and remember to dress warmly. Music sheets will be provided by the Association. Hope to see you out there singing.

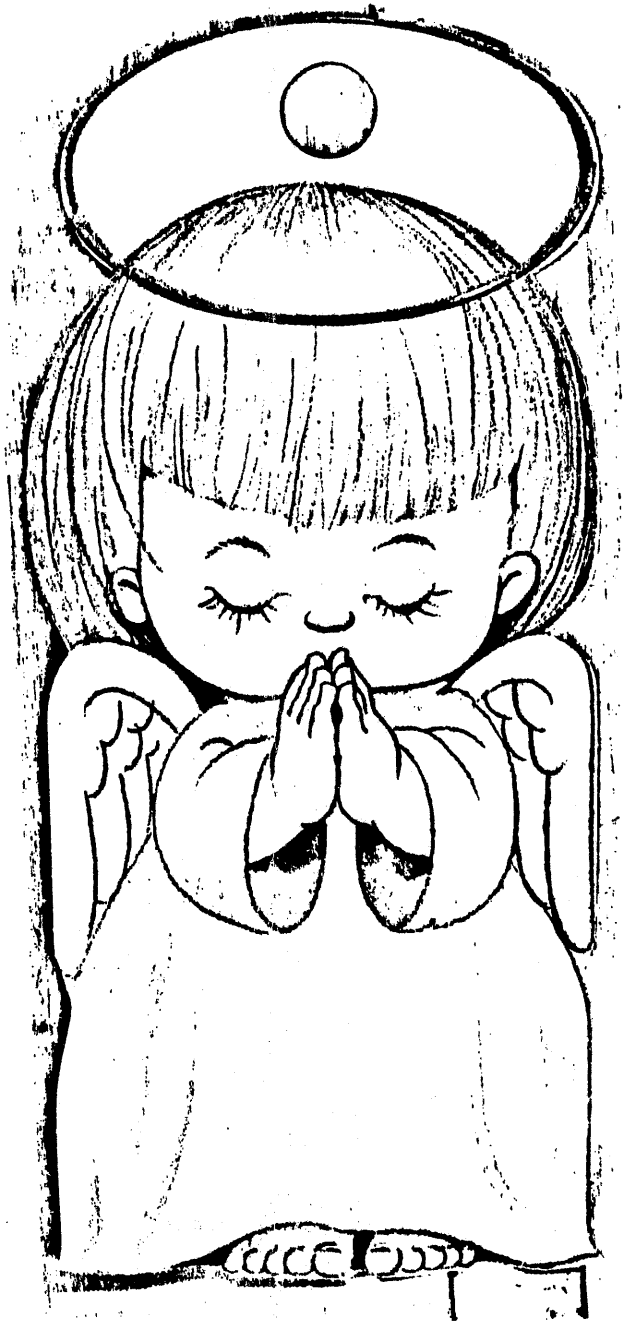
Community Awareness
Committee

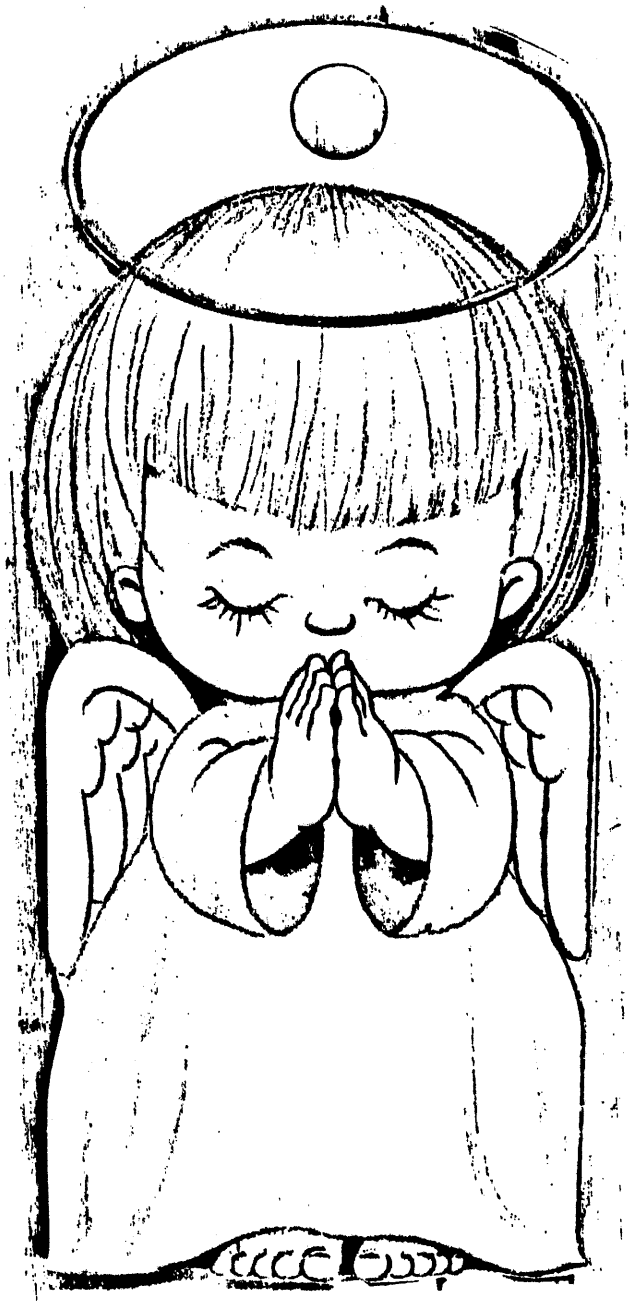
TOYS FOR TOTS

The R.N.A. is once again collecting toys to give to the Salvation Army for distribution at Christmas time to underprivileged youngsters. Please bring a new or used toy to the next general meeting of the Assn. The toys need not be wrapped and can be for all age groups. Used toys must be in working condition or must contain all necessary parts as in the case of games. The pick-up for the toys is the same deadline as the food drive. Thursday December 15th. For any further information call 659-2245 after 5:00pm. Money contributions can also be made and a committee member will shop for you.

Maria E. Tuzzo
Committee Chairwoman







color, cut along lines,make hole on top
put string thru hole and hang on tree.

HARBORVIEW'S HOLIDAY PARTY

FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

V. Brunetti **CR-18
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RIVERVIEW Neighborhood Association

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Bob Lewis
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